

SHUTDOWN? Learning Must Continue....



At the end of October, Edu Child Foundation Uganda successfully delivered much-needed hard copies of study materials to 100 orphaned and vulnerable children in the communities we serve, to enable the them continue learning amidst the school closures due to Covid-19. These, were delivered with instructions on how to use them, covering all subjects.



"For a long time, I knew that there was no way my life would change. I knew I had messed up my future and everything had come to an end for me, especially the hope of education" - Fiona Irachan reflecting on her story before Edu Child Foundation Uganda took her on this year. Fiona got pregnant at just 15 years after finishing her primary education, and that alone meant all was over.

EDU CHILD FOUNDATION UGANDA

OUR STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS



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2020 - END OF YEAR PUBLICATION



EDU CHILD FOUNDATION UGANDA

Raising An Empowered Generation

2020 - What A Year!



THE INVISIBLE ENEMY

2020 is a year that will be remembered for a long while in this generation. It is a year that no one hoped for. It came with great challenges for everyone because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and this proved even much harder for our children, and the vulnerable rural communities we serve. As we reflect, we are stuck on many wishes for what we would have done to prepare for the season. As an organization, we had to come up with various mitigation measures to be able to support the community, and the children that we serve. We had to pull resources from every direction we could, and work hard through the lockdown to look after the community.

Since the Covid-19 outbreak, Uganda has to-date, registered over 30,000 cases and 230 Covid-19 related deaths. The pandemic became our invisible enemy, changing our lives radically without ever revealing itself directly. It has been invisible, but its effects are visible everywhere.

Although Uganda's tightly-controlled response to the Covid-19 pandemic since march seems to have had a more positive health outcome, in containing the outbreak so far, they have also caused significant damage to the economy. Looking at the socioeconomic impact in Uganda, and especially on people living in poverty; Covid-19 has greatly affected the poorest and most vulnerable sections of the society in areas of health, food security/vulnerability, education, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sectors.

Even before registering its first case, the government took proactive measures to prevent the spread of Coronavirus, which was already present in most of Uganda's neighboring countries. This involved implementing one of the strictest lockdowns in sub-Saharan Africa. Combined with Uganda's high poverty rates and the challenges it faces with social sector service delivery, it is imperative to look at the impact of both the pandemic, and the government's Covid-19 response measures on people living in poverty.







SHUTDOWN? Learning Must Continue....



(Some of our children posing with copies of their study materials after revision with their teachers)

On March 13, 2020, the Ugandan government abruptly closed schools and colleges nationwide in response to COVID-19, disrupting over 15 million learners countrywide. The social and economic costs were not borne evenly, however, with devastating consequences for marginalized learners. This was especially the case for girls in rural, and marginalized communities such as Pawong, Jupamagwar, Jupako in Nebbi – where we serve.

In response to these tough measures in place, one of our priorities was to make sure the people of these communities had the necessities to survive this difficult time that no one was prepared for. With this, a different question on how to engage and support the school going children arose - what would happen to these children if the pandemic caused the world to stay on lockdown for the whole year? While COVID-19 affected nearly all learners globally, school closures exacerbated already existing inequalities for marginalized learners and came with a host of unintended consequences for vulnerable rural children most especially the girls.

Directives from the Ugandan ministry of education and other agencies in response to continued learning indicated that learners needed to undertake online learning or technology-mediated learning on TV, radio, ed-tech apps, and mobile phones. While such learning could take place in urban areas, for many marginalized children in remote villages, such as Pawong where we serve, learning during COVID-19 school closures throughout the year was a deep challenge. This was because, learning mediated through ed-tech remained out of reach for many disadvantaged children due to connectivity challenges. In remote parts of Jupangira Sub-county, for example, electricity does not reach households, excluding children from such learning spaces.

On engaging with different stakeholders at both district and local level, we realized that what could be more effective to encourage continuous learning for this affected group of pupils/students (those in rural areas), was having hard/printed copies of study/learning materials as per the government curriculum, directly in the hands of the leaners. As such, we launched a fundraising effort to help us provide the much-needed hard copies of learning materials to the vulnerable rural children in our areas of operation, and more specifically, those under our direct care. We are so grateful that, by end of October, we were able to deliver these learning materials in the form of Homework Packages of school work that they had missed, and

those they needed to conclude the school year. These, we delivered to every household in which all the children under our care dwell, with instructions on how to use them. We were moved by the conviction that if the children can't go to school as it has been the case throughout the year, we needed to take the school to them. This move meant a lot to all the learners as most of them had spent several months without learning. It also helped keep the children home and allow their parents to support their continuous learning amidst the drastic lock-down measures imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. And most importantly, we believe that, the exercise of supporting the children with these learning materials reinforced our mandate of ensuring that these -



(All 100 children Got their Study Packages)

children have a fighting chance in life and strengthen their resolve to compete with the rest of the children who have access to online and other ed-tech learning. We greatly appreciate all those who supported this fundraising drive through prayers, giving of resources and sharing of wisdom on how best to actualize it. We also, in a special way want to appreciate our resilient field program coordinators, especially **Kennedy and Hope** who oversaw the entire distribution process. Our sincere thanks go to the wonderful people (our angels), most especially, **Robert Gierke**, who showed up and generously contributed towards this cause, to ensure we are able to print all the hard copies of learning materials for each of the 100 kids. Our team worked tirelessly to ensure all sponsored children receive their copies. We give all the glory to God. **THANK YOU**.



Hope Cherry, one of our program coordinators, speaking to a group of pupils at Pawong Primary School during the distribution exercise in September.

Rising Up After Teenage Pregnancy - My Journey

Adolescent pregnancies are a global problem but occur most often in poorer and marginalized communities. Approximately 90% of births to girls aged 15-19 in developing countries occur within early marriage where there is often an imbalance of power, no access to contraception and pressure on girls to prove their fertility.

Many girls face considerable pressure to marry early and become mothers while they are still a child. It remains a major contributor to maternal and child mortality. Complications relating to pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death for girls aged 15-19 globally. Pregnant girls and adolescents also face other health risks and complications due to their immature bodies. Babies born to younger mothers are also at greater risk. For many adolescents, pregnancy and childbirth are neither planned, nor wanted. In countries like Uganda, where abortion is prohibited or highly restricted, adolescents typically resort to unsafe abortion, putting their health and lives at risk. Some 3.9 million unsafe abortions occur each year to girls aged 15-19 in developing regions.

For Fiona Irachan, it was no strange thing. She got pregnant at just 15 years after finishing her primary education, and that alone meant all was over. Fiona had struggled to keep herself in school throughout her primary education. Due to extreme poverty in her family, there was always a reason for her not to go to school starting from a lack of school fees, scholastic materials, or need to help her family with housework and gardening. This got worse when she became a teenager — all of a sudden, she started noticing different body changes, and before she could even get herself together, she began hearing advices that she was ripe for marriage.

Fiona's story is no different. It is what most rural teenage, and young girls go through daily. Factors such as parental income, cultural bias towards girl-child education, and pride price, the extent of a girl's education, among other reasons contribute to this problem. Girls who have received minimal education are 5 times more likely to become a mother than those with higher levels of education. Pregnant girls often drop out of school, limiting opportunities for future employment and perpetuating the cycle of poverty. In many cases, girls perceive pregnancy to be a better option than continuing their education.

On finishing her primary education, Fiona became vulnerable as all of a sudden, it seemed like she had become a woman who must get married. All kinds of home responsibilities and expectations were put on her. She found herself being part of various traditional marriage ceremonies as hostess. In the course of this, she got exposed and influenced into sexual promiscuity which ended into early/teenage pregnancy at 15. The young man/boy who was responsible for the pregnancy could not take responsibility because he was also still young. This left her at the mercy of her family. She all of a sudden, became a single mum and that meant the end to her dreams of attaining a university degree. Fiona spent two years home nursing her child with the help of her extended family. She was constantly reminded that her education had halted. In her own words, she says - "For a long time, I knew that there was no way my life would change. I knew I had messed up my future and everything had come to an end for me, especially the hope of education"

This year, while executing our recruitment exercise for new girls to join our scholarship program, we found Fiona, and were moved by her story. We took her on and put her back in school. She started her first year of high school and is so overwhelmed by joy to see a "once impossible dream" come to life.

The government's initial Covid-19 response measures included closing all educational institutions, banning public gathering and imposing travel restrictions to and from affected countries. As a result, Uganda managed to keep the virus spread below 150 until 20 May. However, following the relaxation of lockdown measures on 21 May, the number of infections started to rise quickly.

Despite Uganda's relatively low numbers of infection, some response measures, like the lockdown, night curfew, and closed borders, have significantly disrupted livelihood. While many restrictions have now been partially lifted, the rapid rise in number of new infections has forced the government to maintain some districts under lockdown, with another nationwide total lockdown likely. Consequently, the socioeconomic impacts of Covid-19 are disproportionately affecting the poorest sections of society.



The MSEs that remain afloat are facing worse credit and liquidity constraints than they did prior to the pandemic. As a result, socioeconomic consequences Covid-19 currently outweigh the positive health impact limiting its spread which was the government's main agenda.

The direct impact of Covid-19 has caused the loss of jobs and incomes, with worst cases of MSE owners experiencing incomes falling below zero, resulting in the discontinuation of their business activities. It is estimated that about 23% of the urban poor could have lost 100% of their daily income during and after the lockdown. The MSEs that remain afloat are facing worse credit and liquidity constraints than they did prior to the pandemic. As a result, the socioeconomic consequences of Covid-19 currently outweigh the positive health impact of limiting its spread which was the government's main agenda.

Today, a key challenge for Uganda's response to Covid-19 is how to balance response measures with the need for continued implementation of service delivery in line with the country's medium- and long-term development targets. Covid-19 relief and humanitarian assistance has been largely focused on urban areas and formal sectors. This neglects the rural areas where the vast majority of poor people live. Our hope as a people of this nation, just like the rest of the world, is for quick remedy of vaccination against this virus to enable systematic restoration of growth and living pathways for humanity. Our hope as a people of this nation, just like the rest of the world, is for quick remedy of vaccination against this virus to enable systematic restoration of growth and living pathways for humanity.

FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY



For over 50 Days from March to end of May 2020, Uganda government imposed the most strict and tough control measures in averting the spread of Covid-19, one of the most paramount was the strong limitations on movement of persons. For anyone to go anywhere, such a person needed approvals and certificate of movement from various government authorities in order to justify his/her movement, and this was the toughest to even secure.

As we have shared in prior stories, this greatly impacted on the livelihood of the most vulnerable in the country. One such great impact was food shortages that led to serious hunger for most poor and vulnerable families, especially those in peri-urban and rural poor. Many such families would spend 2-3 days without a meal. In response, the government started giving out food relief



to those who had been greatly affected. This, however, only concentrated within the suburbs of the capital city (Kampala), and its surrounding districts of Wakiso, Mukono, and Entebbe; leaving the upcountry (rural poor) at the mercy of well-wishers. To worsen the challenge, the government set strict rules regarding food relief, centralizing all food supplies as a mandate for the government alone, and yet it ignored the most vulnerable people in the rural areas. The president issued a directive that, anybody else who distributes food to the communities must be arrested on grounds that they are trying to spread the COVID-19, and whoever was found would be charged with attempted murder. This led to arrest of a lot of political activists who had been found offering food relief to their constituencies.

As an organization, our team was also caught in the dilemma of whether to respond to the hundreds of calls for help from the starving families in the communities we serve, or to just ignore. As time went on, we reached a point when we could not hold back anymore. We hence decided to seek support and approval from the local authorities to enable us show up for those starving.



We therefore, mobilized for some additional funds to top up on the little funds we had left in our account to help us purchase food supplies to reach out to these starving families providing them with the food such as rice, corn flour, cooking oil, beans, salt, and sanitary supplies like soap that they lacked. Thanks to our staff for their sacrifices and all our different partners who stood in the gap. We distributed food supplies to over 200 families in the communities of Pawong, Jupangira, Ayomo, and Goli by end of the month of July, and this we accomplished with the help and approval of local council and, community, and district leaders. Additionally, we want to greatly appreciate our great friends, Josefine Koehler, Jessica Dexter, StAgez Team lead by Dyke Wilke, Svenja and Sina, among others for all they pushed to ensure we had the funds we most needed to feed the hungry!

Hope For Street Kids Program - Feeding Street Kids



The restriction on movements also meant that lots of businesses, including restaurants were closed. For street children who mainly depend on begging on streets, and eating food remains from restaurants, hunger hit them so hard. In response to this, through our partner program, Hope for street Kids (HFSK), we were able to arrange two occasions to feed a cumulative figure of over 180 street children by the end of August from the streets of Kampala. Our coordinator, and founder of the program, Derrick Otua, spearheaded this effort with great support from Madan Sina Weber, and other volunteers. We greatly appreciate Madan Sina Weber, Svenja, and their whole family for making this day possible by mobilizing the needed funds to support the cause.

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITIES TO FIGHT COVID-19



Our Efforts in Combating the Spread of Covid-19

Assessing the poor state of health facilities and medical services in most developing countries, including Uganda, the thought of a wide-spread scenario of COVID-19 put thousands or millions of lives of those in most vulnerable states at very high risk. The World Health Organization and different international health agencies thoroughly emphasized the great importance of handwashing in the fight against Covid-19 citing that, it was been proven beyond doubt, that regular washing of hands with clean water and soap or cleaning of hands with alcohol-based sanitizers have over 95% efficiency in killing the virus got through contacts.

For rural communities of Jupangira Sub-county, including major offices within Nebbi District, access to appropriate handwashing kits was a major challenge. With the support of Action for Rural Women's Empowerment (ARUWE) in partnership with Signpost International, Edu Child Foundation Uganda in May, stepped in to support remote communities of Nebbi District (Jupangira Subcounty), by providing handwashing kits to major social and community centers, as well as engaging in community sensitization efforts to raise awareness about the threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting basic prevention measures at homesteads in the communities of reach. Consequently, with support from ARUWE, through their partnership with Signpost International, Edu Child Foundation Uganda donated a total of 30 handwashing kits by end of May, under the Covid-19 Response Initiative aimed at mitigating the spread and impact of Corona Virus (Covid-19) within Nebbi District. Included among the recipient communities were the Residence District Commissioner, and Jupangira Sub-county offices, community markets or social centers, social centers, and the bordering stations.

Joining the Nebbi District Covid-19 Taskfoce



Following directives from the president of Uganda, His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, sample collection, management, and curtailing of all COVID-19 cases was decentralized to local government level in the

districts under the leadership of the Residence District Commissioners. Each district established its COVID-19 task-force to oversee all efforts in the fights against the invisible enemy (COVID-19). ECFUG team was privileged to be invited as a part of the development partners combining efforts with the district team to mitigate the spread and impact of COVID-19 within Nebbi District. All forms of support for the communities in the district, were first handed through the District COVID-19 Task-force before being disbursed to the communities. As a development partner in the district, we are grateful for this opportunity to belong to be a part of the Nebbi District Covid-19 Task-force, as it gave Edu Child Foundation Uganda, a huge platform to showcase its various interventions in the district and leading to more recognition of our work by key leaders in Nebbi.

Community Covid-19 Taskforce Training



With support from the Nebbi District Health Officer, in the 2nd quarter of 2020, ECFUG conducted training for 10 selected Community Covid-19 Task-Force that consisted of mainly Village Health Teams, Local Council Chairpersons and Counselors; tasked with the mandate of raising awareness within their Sub-counties about the threat of Covid-19 at homestead level. Mr. Jude, who is one of the training experts at the district, helped equip the team with key information, including current infections, recoveries and recorded death at both global and local levels; highlighting how the virus is spread; preventions; current efforts in finding vaccines; and our roles in ensuring all lay community members have the right information on how to deter spread of the virus. A lot of questions about myths on the Covid-19 were answered and at the end of the training, each VHT was given copies of the Covid-19 information Poster to help guide them in their community sensitization efforts.



Nebbi District, among other districts, is mapped as a highrisk zone for the spread of the Corona Virus in Uganda on the account that it borders the Democratic Republic of Congo, which already, has had several cases of death from the virus. Jupangira Sub-county on the other hand is one of the main bordering communities to DRC and as such, is ranked as a high-risk area. Edu Child Foundation Uganda, through the trained Community Covid-19 Task-Force, carried out an intensive door-to-door sensitization drive in the bordering communities, helping spread the most needed information about the spread and prevention of Corona Virus in these communities, including the most hard-to-reach areas; to ensure that maximum vigilance is observed within these high-risk areas. The team launched the community sensitization drive in early May, starting with the border community of Boma East Village located within Goli Parish, Jupangira Sub-county – Nebbi District; and concluded the entire exercise within 10 days from the start of the activity, covering the entire sub-county.

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In light of building the capacity of marginalized teenage and young mothers with livelihood skills to enhance their ability to afford the basics of living, ECFUG in July this year was able to train a group of 10 young mothers with liquid and bar soap making skills as

a valuable entrepreneurial skill for livelihood. Cases of early marriage and teenage pregnancy is so high in Nebbi district, and ECFUG, through the Women Empowerment Program (WEP), reaches out to address the needs of these struggling young mothers and girls in the communities we serve – championing women empowerment agenda, and spearheading the fight against women/girl-child abuse/violence, with the hope of empowering and uplifting the standards of young mothers and women in our communities of operation.

With the acquisition of the liquid and bar soap making skill, we envision the trained young mothers each, having an income generating venture to be economically empowered. In 2021, we are launching a Fashion Design and Tailoring Workshop to equip them with more hands-on skills.

Community Needs, and Impact Assessment Exercise



Working in remote, and vulnerable communities over the years has taught us that, people's needs are keep changing every time and again. To be relevant to the communities we serve, we have continued to carry out needs and impact assessments to ascertain best interventions in the communities we serve.

The war on poverty, hunger, illiteracy, gender inequality, diseases, and all forms of global challenges that deter progress of human beings is not done yet. We are part of the fighters who won't quit, in and out of season. This year, just like others past, our team were relentlessly in the field throughout August for this purpose. All we desire as a development partner to these communities is BETTER. We want these communities to rise and thrive. We are the change and we rise to the occasion.

Discipleship, and Character Development Training



This is a special part of our mentorship programs for all the children who benefit from the Education Sponsorship Program. Each weekend of this year, our field coordinators spent time connecting with the kids under our care, with the intention of equipping them with high moral, social, personal and spiritual traits to help them mature into great men and women of —

integrity. Through the discipleship and character development program, our children learned to be obedient and respectful - evidenced by reports from the schools they go to where no case of indiscipline was registered.

Parents/guardians of our kids have consistently given us feedback during our follow-up meetings, regarding how these children's lives have been greatly transformed through this program. We believe it's good to train up kids in the right way so that when they grow, they will bring us joy.

Other KeyHighlights



2020 has been even more challenging for our football team, Keno Hot Stars FC, as the government banned all sports activities, taking away livelihood of a lot of young men we reach out to through the soccer club which is under our iNSPIRE Youth Program.

As we thought all was over for the team, we were blessed with an opportunity to complete registration of the soccer club with Federation of Uganda Football Association (FUFA) during the lockdown. The lockdown also gave us an opportunity to clear and prep our playing field.

Keno Hot Stars FC mostly consists of young boys, some of whom are school going students that need a lot of help and support. Football is a livelihood and a unifier for most of the youth in these communities. We have a girls' soccer team as well as a part of the club. The Girl's team was birthed from the tournament we had in early march to commemorate the International Women's Day. These young girls are very happy being part of this team and some of them are single mothers. Most of them are vulnerable and looking for place to belong to and forget their difficult lives.

Apart from We having an opportunity to disciple and mentor these youth, Edu Child Foundation Uganda strives to support them and make them feel loved, and help empower them with alternative skills or means of getting money that is dignified.



Some Highlights of HFSKP Key Engagements

In Uganda, just like other parts of the world, children living on the streets are seen as an eyesore, pollution of the cities and towns and called names such as 'Muyaaye,' which translates to words like a hooligan, deviant, or criminal. The stigmatization and prejudice that street children in Uganda encounter in their daily lives make them more vulnerable. However, even without stigmas and negative labels, the children are still forced into a life of no shelter, exposure to drugs, sexual exploitation, gang beatings, foraging through trash for food scraps, begging, stealing, child labor, and police abuse



In 2020, our main focus was on building relationships, and trust with the children living on the street as a means of identifying and recruiting them into our programs. From experience, we have learned that children on the street do not easily trust people unless they have a relationship with them. To accomplish this, apart from occasionally sharing meals and offering medical/first aid care to them, we also focused on reaching them directly on the streets to inspire their growth in key life aspects such as spiritual, social, mental, and physical needs. Every week, our program coordinator, Derrick Otua visited, and spent time with them - engaging them in plays, and at the same time, having an opportunity to have critical character development discussion sessions where he taught them about virtues of forgiveness, sanitation and hygiene habits, integrity, love, reconciliation, dangers of drug abuse, respect and responsibility, humility, hard work, and other life skills. This has helped us in not only bonding more with the children but also given us chance to speak life into them, providing counsel and encouragement.

In addition to this, we are grateful that this year, we were able to resettle four (4) children; one with his family and the other three – we connected to other programs that run children rescue shelters to help them find a home since we don't have our own shelters yet. Through the Hope for Street Kids Program (HFSK), our hope is to ensure that street children are given a holistic opportunity to transform into fulfilled and responsible persons of the society - positively contributing to averting the challenges they face through a theory of rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration.



One of the many lessons we have learned over the years is that, we cannot schedule moments of uncertainties or sorrows; but we have controls over our moments of happiness. We saw and experienced countless challenges this year, none of which were planned for, ranging from the pandemic to all its resulting effects such as loss of jobs, death, boarder shutdown, etc.

As the year came to an end, we realized that the holiday season was around the corner and all over the world, this season brings so much joy as families connect to spend time together, play together, pray together, eat together and generally enjoy the company of each other. This to us, presented an opportunity to join in the celebrations, plugging in to do some good around it that involves all our stakeholders. We are so grateful to our partner StAgez for the beautiful idea that they shared with us, to have the street kids we mentor through the Hope For Street Kids Program, engage in holiday picture paintings/drawings that could be used for Christmas/Holiday Postcards covers; which would then be printed, and distributed in Germany to fundraise for the program.

Derrick Otua, the program founder, and coordinator took charge of this project and worked with the street kids living on the slums of Kampala to Design the Postcards. With the support and advice from the StAgez team, Madam Sina was able to send these drawings/paintings all the way to Germany for Distribution. The team have been working with cafes and shops in Braunsch-

weig to serve as distribution stations for the postcards. And for a small donation, the StAgez team have been reaching out to share these with people, encouraging them to purchase as many of them as they can to send to their loved ones. Our hope is that all the money that will come from this initiative will benefit the street children in Kampala directly.





Raising An Empowered Generation

NEWS

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Become Our Partner

As we close this year, we want to extend our sincere gratitude to all the special people who joined us this year and those have stood with us over the years, empowering us to implement our various programs aimed at improving the quality of lives of those we serve. Edu Child Foundation Uganda has had consistent fastpaced growth of programs and teams in the last three years which has resulted into increasing pressure on the little resources in the organizations disposal due to the current limited partnership base.

For this reason, we kindly extend our invitation to more compassionate people who have been inspired by our work and appreciates our vision, to join us and be a part of this journey. Any donation will support Edu Child Foundation Uganda's vital work of ensuring children, women and vulnerable youth in Uganda have access to at least the most basic human rights: education, clean water, food, health care, and economic opportunities. You can donate to us directly through our website: www.ecfug.org OR contact us through our details on the side for tax deductible donations or other partnership options.



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